TD/B/39(1)8
TD/B/WP/79

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget on its twenty-first session

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
from 31 August to 8 September 1992

UNITED NATIONS

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New York, 1993

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GE.92-53235/1310K (E)

INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-first session of the Working Party on the Medium-Term Plan and the Programme Budget was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 31 August to 8 September 1992.

2. In the course of the session, two plenary meetings were held. This report gives a short account of the proceedings of those meetings.

Opening statement

3. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that the review by the Working Party of the draft revisions of the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1992-1997 would be taking place on the eve of the consideration by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) of these and other proposed revisions of the plan. The text before the Working Party was the unedited version of the text that would be submitted to CPC.

4. With regard to document A/47/6 (Prog. 15), the text contained some additional proposals for revisions arising from the results of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Paris in September 1990, as well as some proposed revisions arising from the outcome of UNCTAD VIII.

5. Programmes 13 and 14, as contained in documents A/47/6 (Prog. 13) and (Prog. 14), had been substantially revised in order to integrate into the medium-term plan - the principal policy directive of the United Nations - the major decisions taken by UNCTAD VIII concerning the substantive reorientation and institutional adaptation of the work of UNCTAD. UNCTAD VIII had confirmed and extended UNCTAD's mandate, giving salience and developing new common approaches to long-standing trade and development problems and related new and emerging issues. Further, the Conference had agreed on a comprehensive reorientation of the substantive work of UNCTAD, in effect delineating the scope of UNCTAD's activities in the coming quadrennium on the basis of four major themes: a new international partnership for development, global interdependence, paths to development, and sustainable development. The rationale and structure of programmes 13 and 14 were in fact based on those four themes and the issues highlighted therein.

6. Further, the substance of programmes 13 and 14, with the exception of the ITC subprogrammes included in programme 14, had been drawn from the results of UNCTAD VIII, as contained in "A New Partnership for Development: The Cartagena Commitment" (TD/364), as well as from the terms of reference established by the Board in its decision 398 (XXXVIII) for the Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups created by UNCTAD VIII. Together, they combined to give a new and enriched policy framework for the work of UNCTAD in the period ahead.

7. Moreover, the four main themes and the issues highlighted therein had also provided a basis for determining priority designations. Thus, a number of subprogrammes corresponding to those issues had been selected for this purpose in such a way as to achieve a certain balance between the four main themes.

8. The new policy agenda was a substantial and rich one that would enable UNCTAD not only to make its own contribution to the intergovernmental consideration of both long-standing and new trade and development issues but also to enhance the practical value of its work to individual governments and groups of governments.

9. With regard to item 6 and the question of resources, it was clear from the proposed revisions to UNCTAD sections of the medium-term plan that, further to the results of UNCTAD VIII, UNCTAD found itself having to deal with a wide and extended range of issues. At the same time, it was confronted with a tight resource situation, and the secretariat would need to pay particular attention to the efficient and flexible use of its resources. Further, it would have to ensure that the manner in which it formulated and implemented its work programme would lead to effective support in each main area and not result in resources being spread too thinly over too wide a field. This would call not only for some selectivity but also for a step-by-step approach, where appropriate and possible. For their part, the new Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups would have to establish clear priorities when drawing up their respective work programmes. The secretariat would continue to provide substantive support for the work of the Board and its subsidiary bodies to undertake research and to issue reports and publications. However, it was expected that, following the Cartagena Conference, government representatives and experts would bring to the debates within UNCTAD substantive elements based on their country experiences.

10. A new proposed organizational structure for the secretariat had in fact been drawn up, with consequential redeployment of staff within the secretariat, in order to meet the requirements of the new work programme and intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD. It was presently under consideration in New York. It was intended to respond to two major considerations, namely (i) to provide for a clear and visible response to the new intergovernmental structures, orientations and tasks established by the Conference and the Board, as well as to the terms of reference of the new Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups; and (ii) to maximize efficiency and flexibility in the use of existing resources in such a way that in some areas requiring similar skill mixes (such as work on development strategies) collaborative teams and arrangements, rather than strict compartmentalization of activities, would be the norm.

11. UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities were designed to support national capacity-building in beneficiary countries, to promote cooperation among developing countries and to enhance international cooperation for development. The period under review, 1989-1991, had been a time of rapid expansion, then consolidation, in the programme as a whole. Several new initiatives had been launched, but most importantly, technical cooperation was now more firmly integrated in the work of the secretariat.

12. The approach of integrating technical cooperation and the regular work of the secretariat had been strongly supported by member States at UNCTAD VIII. Although integration had not been achieved in all programme areas, progress had generally been good. Certain analytical or research subjects did not naturally lend themselves to specific technical cooperation projects, but the

reverse should never hold; care should be exercised not to initiate or undertake operational activities unsupported by significant analytical or technical backstopping from the secretariat.

13. However, extrabudgetary contributions for research and analysis that fell under the rubric of technical cooperation could help to introduce new ideas and concepts into both the regular and the operational work of the secretariat, as demonstrated by studies on the implementation of Paris Club agreements, trade policy reform or tradeable carbon emission entitlements. It was through this process that the alleged dichotomy between research and analysis and technical cooperation could be resolved.

14. The integration of operational activities with the secretariat's regular work also imparted a degree of specificity and comparative advantage to UNCTAD's technical cooperation. This in turn enabled UNCTAD to direct its technical cooperation around a distinct number of specific - and marketable - products and services. Such specificity facilitated the coordination of its activities with relevant programmes of other organizations working in the same area. Examples included UNCTAD's collaboration with the World Bank as regards debt management and the extensive cooperation between ASYCUDA and several other international organizations. It also enabled donors, who increasingly searched for "centres of excellence", to appreciate the significance of support to developing countries through UNCTAD's programmes.

15. Activities in 1992 would show a decline over those in 1991, due entirely to the traditional drop in funding from UNDP at the beginning of a new five-year UNDP programming cycle. However, this drop in UNDP's support for UNCTAD's technical cooperation might this time continue inasmuch as resources available to UNDP's regional programmes that had consistently supported activities for trade and economic cooperation had been substantially reduced in the new UNDP cycle. UNCTAD was likely to be particularly affected as regards its regional activities in Africa.

16. As requested by the Working Party, the secretariat would continue to diversify sources of support for UNCTAD's technical cooperation. However, development aid programmes remained constrained by overall public expenditure limits in donor countries and by the appeal for urgent humanitarian relief programmes. Nevertheless, UNCTAD VIII's strong support for technical cooperation could be marshalled by emphasizing the proven track record and the promise of several of UNCTAD's more imaginative programmes.

17. The UNCTAD secretariat expressed its deep appreciation for the support of all those many donors who had been able to maintain and sometimes increase their contributions. A considerable number of OECD countries, and developing countries as well, contributed in one form or another. Particular mention should be made of Italy and the Netherlands for providing an annual overall contribution allocated to mutually agreed priority projects. Similar arrangements with other donors would be welcomed. Further, there were good prospects of additional funding through cooperation with the Commission of the European Communities and other sources, including the World Bank and the regional development banks.

18. With regard to coordinating UNCTAD's technical cooperation with relevant activities of other organizations, good progress had been made in this regard. UNCTAD fully supported and relied heavily on UNDP, especially to ensure coordination at the country level. Relations at the operational level with ITC were particularly important, and although there had been some progress, there was no doubt that both beneficiary countries and donors would benefit from greater operational synergy between the two organizations in such areas as trade information, training and human resource development and trade policy advice linked to trade promotion activities.

19. The period under review had also seen an increase in the number of potential beneficiaries of UNCTAD's technical cooperation as a result of the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. UNCTAD had done its best to respond to those specific requests for assistance within its competence on the basis of additional financial resources, and it would continue to do so.

20. The Cartagena Conference had requested the Board to undertake, midway between Conferences, a policy review of UNCTAD's technical cooperation. The present session of the Working Party could help to arrange for such a review, by indicating any particular matters it would wish to see included in the secretariat's next biennial report on technical cooperation.

21. With regard to programme evaluation, the report before the Working Party (TD/B/WP/77) reviewed the development of the evaluation process in UNCTAD and discussed future activities and orientations arising from the results of UNCTAD VIII, including the review of work programmes to be undertaken by the Board midway between Conferences. At the first part of the thirty-second session of CPC, held in May 1992, the Joint Inspection Unit had again praised UNCTAD for its practice of reporting its evaluation findings to member States of UNCTAD. The CPC had decided that the findings from self-evaluation studies should be reported by programme managers to their respective governing bodies and that such reports should be placed on the agendas of the specialized governing bodies.

Chapter I

REVIEW OF THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES OF UNCTAD AND THEIR FINANCING
(Agenda item 3)

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD ON THE WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT ON PROGRAMME EVALUATION
(Agenda item 4)

REVIEW OF DRAFT REVISIONS TO THE UNCTAD SECTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR 1992-1997
(Agenda item 5)

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ADOPTED BY THE WORKING PARTY AT ITS NINTH SESSION
(Agenda item 6)

22. For its consideration of items 3, 4 and 5, the Working Party had before it the following documentation:

"Technical cooperation programme of UNCTAD, 1989-1991: report by the UNCTAD secretariat" (TD/B/WP/76 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Corr.1) (agenda item 3);

"Programme evaluation in UNCTAD: report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD" (TD/B/WP/77) (agenda item 4);

"Review of the draft revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1992-1997" (TD/B/WP/78) (agenda item 5);

"Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997" (A/47/6 (Prog. 13, 14 and 15)) (agenda item 5).

23. At its 97th (opening) plenary meeting, on 31 August 1992, the Working Party decided to consider agenda items 3, 4, 5 and 6 in informal meetings.

24. At its 98th (closing) plenary meeting, on 8 September 1992, the Chairman noted that the Working Party, meeting as an informal working group, had discussed agenda items 3, 4, 5 and 6 in detail. He expressed the appreciation of the Working Party to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD for informing the Working Party, at an informal meeting, about the reorganization of the secretariat and related matters.

Action by the Working Party

25. At the Working Party's 98th (closing) plenary meeting, the Chairman introduced draft agreed conclusions on agenda items 3, 4 and 5 (TD/B/WP/65 and Add.1), with the following oral amendments:

(a) In document TD/B/WP/L.65, paragraph 3, delete the phrase between square brackets at the end of the paragraph;

(b) In document TD/B/WP/L.65/Add.1, footnote 1, add the following sentence: "ITC subprogrammes and priorities were not reviewed by the Working Party."

(c) In document TD/B/WP/L.65/Add.1, paragraph 14.13, replace the existing text with the following sentence: "Delete the paragraph (see footnote 1)."

26. At the same meeting, the Working Party adopted the draft agreed conclusions, as orally amended (for the text of the agreed conclusions, see annex 1).

27. The Working Party also decided that the statement made by Bangaldesh on behalf of the least developed countries at an informal meeting of the Working Party on 4 September 1992 should be annexed to its report (for the text of the statement, see annex II).

Closing statements

28. The spokesman for the Group of 77 (Peru) welcomed the constructive spirit which had prevailed during the work of the Working Party. With regard to technical cooperation, the secretariat's work in that area had proceeded very effectively, inter alia with regard to computerized databases. However, because of the reduction in resources for UNDP's fifth cycle, in the immediate future UNCTAD would not derive enough resources from the regional programmes to enable it to improve existing technical cooperation programmes and initiate new programmes regarded as necessary as a result of UNCTAD VIII. Accordingly, countries in a position to provide direct financial assistance for UNCTAD's technical cooperation programmes should act without delay to maintain the impetus generated at Cartagena. Of course, such direct contributions must be seen as complementary to multilateral support.

29. The medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 fully reflected the agreements reached in the Cartagena Commitment, as well as the terms of reference of the various standing committees and ad hoc working groups approved by the Board. However, the priorities initially established in programmes 13 and 14 did not necessarily correspond to the wishes of the developing countries. In the Cartagena Commitment, all the topics covered had been given the same priority, and the developing countries wished to see this maintained. It was not, therefore, for the Working Party to assign priority to certain topics or subprogrammes. Any such decision should be taken by the highest intergovernmental bodies within UNCTAD, with the agreement of all member States.

30. One of the recurring themes of the Working Party's discussions had been the situation of countries in transition within the context of the work of UNCTAD and especially with regard to the question of priority in relation to the developing countries. As recognized in the Cartagena Commitment, the countries in transition were facing unprecedented difficulties, and the international community had therefore responded with considerable support.

However, it was also clearly recognized in the Cartagena Commitment that priority should continue to be given to cooperation aimed at promoting the development of developing countries. The work of UNCTAD should therefore centre around promoting development, and the problems of the economies in transition that fell within the terms of reference of UNCTAD should be dealt with on the basis of additional resources.

31. The representative of Japan said that his delegation did not share the views of the UNCTAD secretariat on the priority to be given to subprogrammes in the medium-term plan and considered that UNCTAD should concentrate more on those activities where it had comparative advantage. Because of the limited resources at its disposal, UNCTAD should not expand its activities to areas where other organizations had greater relevance and competence.

32. The representative of the Russian Federation said that the amendments made to the medium-term plan were balanced, served the interests of all member States of UNCTAD and reflected the commitments undertaken at Cartagena. With regard to the priority to be given to subprogrammes in programmes 13 and 14, the final act of UNCTAD VIII represented a compromise package, and since that package served as the basis for the draft revisions to the medium-term plan, work on all subprogrammes should be given equal priority. The new intergovernmental bodies themselves would determine which topics should be dealt with first and which ones later. Nevertheless, his delegation was ready to participate in elaborating a consensus on the matter.

33. His delegation welcomed the assurance given by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD that the specific interests of the countries in transition, including the Russian Federation, would be reflected in the work of the restructured secretariat. In this connection, his delegation assumed that the secretariat would have at its disposal at least the staff provided for in the 1992-1993 programme budget, above all at the professional and higher levels. The D-2 and other posts used for the former programme 13, subprogramme 5, should be retained, possibly with adjustments in tasks. His delegation welcomed the fact that, on the whole, paragraph 80 of the Cartagena Commitment concerning adjustments in the secretariat was being complied with, and in this connection it was important that the provisions of paragraph 86 of the Cartagena Commitment concerning operational flexibility in budgetary, financial and administrative matters should also be complied with.

34. Finally, his delegation expressed appreciation for the fact that the interests of countries in transition with regard to technical cooperation had been duly taken into account by the Working Party.

35. The representative of China said that UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities had proved very beneficial to developing countries. However, the present shortage of resources could have serious repercussions for those activities in future, and he therefore appealed to the developed countries in particular to provide greater support for the relevant trust funds. At the mid-term review of technical cooperation activities to be carried out as a result of UNCTAD VIII, the report to be prepared by the secretariat should not only describe the activities that had taken place but should also indicate the results of those activities.

36. With regard to the medium-term plan, in formulating programmes the secretariat had in general conformed with what had been decided at UNCTAD VIII. With regard to the question of priorities, however, it was the general view that it was for the higher-level instances of UNCTAD, and not the Working Party, to decide thereon. The priorities established should fully reflect the principle that UNCTAD give priority to the interests of developing countries.

37. The representative of Bulgaria expressed concern about the real possibility that CPC might diminish the budget allocated to UNCTAD. Given the new strengthened mandate of UNCTAD and the magnitude of the tasks before it, UNCTAD's budget must be secured at the present level. This would allow the secretariat of UNCTAD to strengthen the comparative advantages of the organization.

38. While UNCTAD had been created mainly to help the developing countries, it should nevertheless adequately support the reform process being undertaken in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in order to help their rapid integration into the international trading system. This new orientation was embodied in the Cartagena Commitment and in the terms of reference of the new intergovernmental bodies. In that connection, his country was interested in the implementation of the subprogrammes on international competition and trade policies, investment and technology, global interdependence, enlarged economic spaces and regional integration processes, privatization, environment and sustainable development, trade efficiency, services and others. It was therefore essential that, after the organizational changes had taken place, the UNCTAD secretariat be adequately staffed and have an appropriate skill mix.

39. The representative of the United Kingdom, referring to the question of Yugoslavia's membership of the Working Party, said it should be noted that no representative of Yugolsavia had participated at any stage in the proceedings of the Working Party. He further referred to the most recent reservations made by the European Community and other member States on several occasions regarding the position of Yugoslavia in the United Nations system.

40. The representatives of Germany, Norway (on behalf of the Nordic countries), Australia and the United States associated themselves with the statement made by the United Kingdom concerning Yugoslavia.

41. The Chairman said that the Working Party had carried out its work in an exceptionally constructive spirit of cooperation. It was hoped that all UNCTAD meetings would proceed on a similar basis.

Chapter II

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

(a) Opening of the session

42. The twenty-first session of the Working Party was opened on 31 August 1992 by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

(b) Election of officers
(Agenda item 1)

43. At its 97th (opening) plenary meeting, on 31 August 1992, the Working Party elected Mr. Leslie B. Gatan (Philippines) as its Chairman and Mr. Doss Adly Doss (Egypt) as its Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

(c) Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
(Agenda item 2)

44. Also at its 97th meeting, the Working Party adopted the provisional agenda approved at the Consultations of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on 17 July 1992 (TD/B/WP/75), as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing
4. Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the work of the secretariat on programme evaluation
5. Review of draft revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997
6. Report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD pursuant to paragraph 4 of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Working Party at its ninth session
7. Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Working Party
8. Other business
9. Adoption of the report of the Working party to the Trade and Development Board

45. With regard to the organization of work, after hearing the opening statement by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD (see introduction above), the Working Party decided to meet as an informal working group to consider agenda items 3, 4, 5 and 6.

(d) Membership and attendance 1/ 2/

46. The following States members of the Working Party were represented at the session: Argentina; Australia; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Egypt; Germany; India; Japan; Nigeria; Norway; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Russian Federation; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United Republic of Tanzania; United States of America; Yugoslavia.

47. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Working Party, were represented at the session: Algeria; Austria; Bangladesh; Burundi; Chile; Equatorial Guinea; France; Hungary; Italy; Jordan; Lebanon; Mexico; Nepal; Netherlands; Niger; Pakistan; Portugal; Senegal; Singapore; Sri Lanka.

48. Palestine participated pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX).

49. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD-GATT was represented at the session.

50. The following specialized agencies were represented at the session: World Bank; United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

51. The following intergovernmental organization was represented at the session: Organization of African Unity.

(e) Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Working Party (Agenda item 7)

52. At its 98th (closing) plenary meeting, on 8 September 1992, the Working Party approved the draft provisional agenda for its twenty-second session (TD/B/WP/L.66). (For the provisional agenda, see Annex III.)

(f) Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board (Agenda item 9)

53. Also at its closing meeting, the Working Party adopted its draft report (TD/B/WP/L.64) and authorized the Rapporteur to complete the report to reflect the proceedings of the closing meeting.

Notes

1/ Membership of the Working Party at its twenty-first session was: Argentina; Australia; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Egypt; Germany; India; Japan; Nigeria; Norway; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Russian Federation; United Kingdom; United Republic of Tanzania; United States of America; Yugoslavia (see TD/B/1309 (Vol. II), chap. VIII, Sect. J, para. 467). For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP/INF.25.

2/ For statements relating to the membership, see paras. 39-40 above.

Annex I

AGREED CONCLUSIONS ADOPTED BY THE WORKING PARTY AT ITS TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Review of draft revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1992-1997

Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the work of the secretariat on programme evaluation

The Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and the Programme Budget

A. Revisions to the medium-term plan

1. Having reviewed the proposed revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as contained in document A/47/6 (Prog.13), (Prog.14) and (Prog.15);

2. Adopts the amendments to the proposed revisions as contained in document TD/B/WP/L.65/Add.1, as orally amended; a/

3. Having discussed the question of prioritizing the subprogrammes, decides, in the light of the decisions taken recently at Cartagena on the reorientation of UNCTAD's work and the lack of time for broad consultations, that the matter of priority setting is for the whole membership of UNCTAD to determine; proposes that the question be further addressed after consideration by all States members of UNCTAD at the next session of the Trade and Development Board;

B. Technical cooperation

4. Takes note with appreciation of the report on technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD (TD/B/WP/76 and Add.1);

5. Welcomes the increase in the level of UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities over the past few years, the relevance and effectiveness of these activities and the cooperation between UNCTAD and other organizations undertaking technical cooperation in the areas of trade and development;

6. Reaffirms the recommendations of UNCTAD VIII to the effect that "UNCTAD's technical cooperation should be strengthened, expanded with the resources available and integrated into all relevant areas of UNCTAD's work";

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a/ For the oral amendments to document TD/B/WP/L.65/Add.1, see para. 25 above.

7. Requests the secretariat to develop proposals for implementation in the new areas identified in the Cartagena Commitment, bearing in mind the resources available and the need for balanced distribution of activities among various geographical regions and countries, particularly least developed, land-locked and island developing countries, as provided by the Paris Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s;

8. Invites UNDP to continue to provide support for UNCTAD's inter-country technical cooperation and appeals to the UNDP Governing Council, in its mid-term review of the Fifth Programming Cycle (1992-1996) to consider restoring the proportionate level of resources allocated for regional programmes;

9. Welcomes the increased support from a growing number of member States and organizations for UNCTAD's technical cooperation programmes and expresses its appreciation to those member States and donors who have increased their support in this regard;

10. Invites bilateral donors, multilateral agencies and all member States who are in a position to do so to increase the level of their extrabudgetary contributions to UNCTAD for technical cooperation, particularly for the purposes outlined at UNCTAD VIII;

11. Acknowledges the appreciation expressed by recipient countries for the support provided by UNDP and UNCTAD in the negotiations for the Uruguay Round; and their desire (a) that this support be continued until the end of the Round, including the evaluation of its results, as recommended in the Punta del Este declaration, and (b) that UNDP and UNCTAD continue their support to developing countries in the implementation phase of the results of the Uruguay Round;

12. Welcomes the increased operationality of UNCTAD's computerized management and information systems and requests the secretariat to evaluate, maintain and update the corresponding data bases and disseminate these systems to developing countries and other member States, including to economic operators;

C. Programme evaluation

13. Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on programme evaluation, as contained in document TD/B/WP/77, invites the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to pursue the work in this area, and requests the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to continue the practice of reporting the results of its evaluation studies to the relevant UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery.

Annex II

STATEMENT BY BANGLADESH, ON BEHALF OF LDCs, AT AN INFORMAL MEETING OF THE WORKING PARTY ON THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN AND PROGRAMME BUDGET, 4 SEPTEMBER 1992

On behalf of the LDCs, I would, at the outset, like to put on record our appreciation to the secretariat for the revised text on programme 15 of the medium-term plan as a whole and subprogramme I on least developed countries in particular. The text faithfully reflects the outcome of the Second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and also the relevant provisions of the Programme of Action, resolutions of the General Assembly and decisions of UNCTAD VIII. We believe that this subprogramme provides a good framework for the UNCTAD secretariat, and in particular its Division for LDCs, to review progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action in the coming years. Effective and timely implementation of the Programme of Action is vitally important because the number of LDCs is going up rather than down. I may note here that the General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session last year, welcomed the creation of the Division for LDCs, which is the only secretariat unit in the entire United Nations system exclusively focusing on the development problematique of a group of 47 countries, and expressed the hope "that the Division will concentrate more fully on the problems and requirements of the least developed countries". Subprogramme I of programme 15 provides useful guidance for carrying out the wish of the Assembly in that regard.

I would also like to add that the need for adequate follow-up and monitoring of the Programme of Action has been consistently and strongly stressed by the LDCs and their development partners - the latest occasion being at UNCTAD VIII - as the key to its effective and timely implementation. At the global level, the UNCTAD secretariat is entrusted with the task of follow-up and review of the Programme. It is indeed a most important area in which UNCTAD has tremendous comparative advantage - if not absolute advantage - vis-à-vis other parts of the United Nations system. However, a number of recent developments, including in particular the ongoing review of the secretariat structure, have made the LDCs deeply apprehensive about the possible adverse consequences for the Division for LDCs in respect of its substantive capacity, level of resources and leadership and visibility within the secretariat structure. The LDCs have already placed their position in this regard before the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and UNCTAD.

The present structure of the Division for LDCs was put in place only about a year ago following the decision by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session to augment the level of resources for it, as well as to upgrade the level of its leadership. It is therefore imperative that it is allowed the opportunity to fully discharge its mandate concerning the implementation of the Programme of Action throughout the 1990s. In view of this and in the interest of effective servicing of the annual follow-up of the Programme of Action by the Trade and Development Board, the LDCs strongly feel that:

(a) The substantive capacity of the Division for LDCs should be fully preserved, and to that end the overall level of resources, including those provided by the United Nations General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, its present visibility in the secretariat structure, and the current level of its leadership should be left intact; particular care should be taken to ensure that this Division is not merged with any other units of the secretariat;

(b) The current work programme of the Division, which is considered adequate and satisfactory in maintaining a concentrated and exclusive focus on the follow-up and review of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs, should be left unchanged and pursued undisturbed.

We would like to call upon the Working Party, while transmitting the revised text of programme 15, also to appropriately include the above concerns of the LDCs in its report and communicate them to the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Annex III

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Review of the UNCTAD section of the proposed United Nations programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995

4. Provisional agenda for the twenty-third session of the Working Party

5. Other business

6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board.

كيفية الحصول على منشورات الامم المتحدة

يمكن الحصول على منشورات الامم المتحدة من المكتبات ودور التوزيع في جميع انحاء العالم . استعلم عنها من المكتبة التي تتعامل معها أو اكتب الى : الامم المتحدة ،قسم البيع في نيويورك او في جنيف .

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Printed at United Nations, Geneva
GE.92-53235–January 1993–3,240

United Nations publication